

Schooling in the Streets

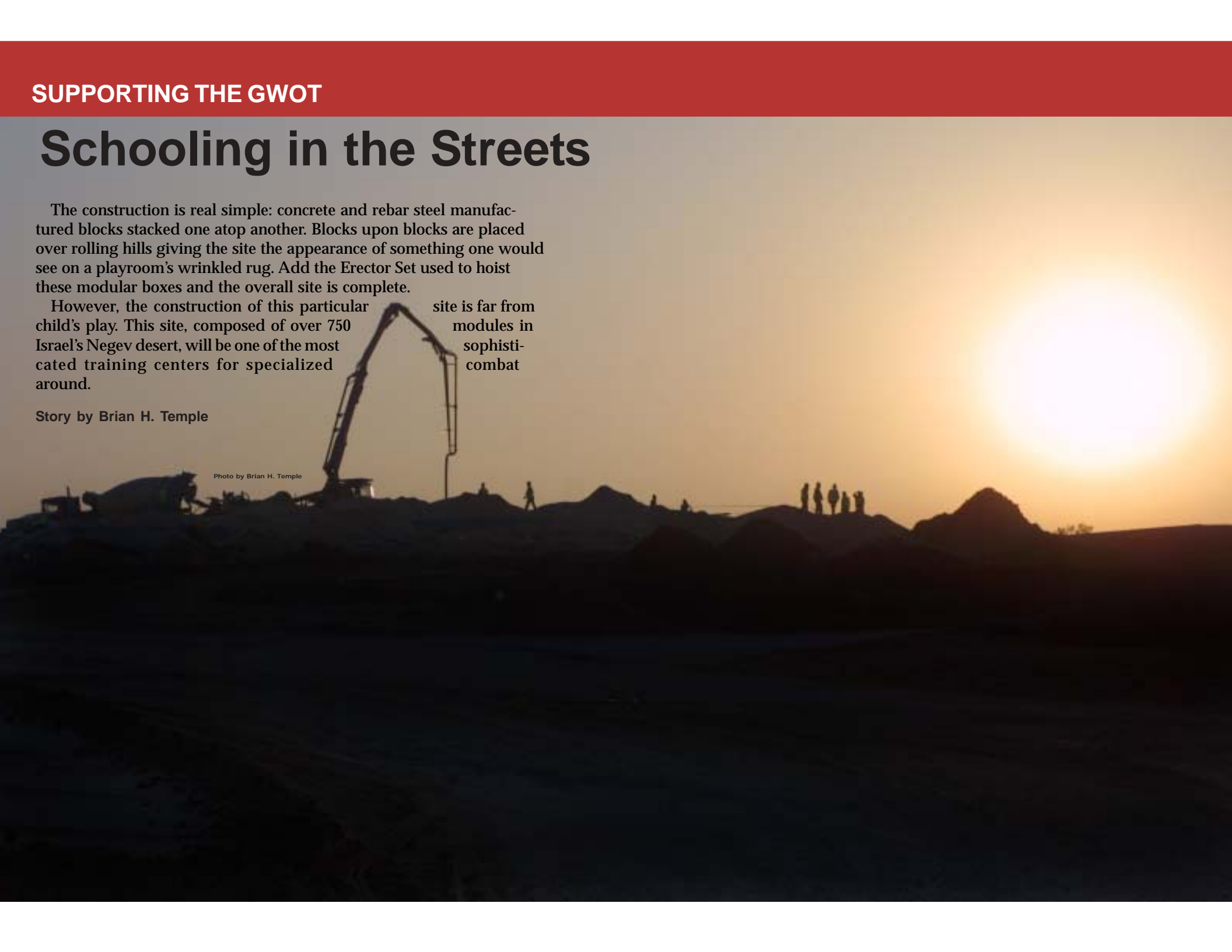
The construction is real simple: concrete and rebar steel manufactured blocks stacked one atop another. Blocks upon blocks are placed over rolling hills giving the site the appearance of something one would see on a playroom's wrinkled rug. Add the Erector Set used to hoist these modular boxes and the overall site is complete.

However, the construction of this particular child's play. This site, composed of over 750 Israel's Negev desert, will be one of the most cated training centers for specialized around.

site is far from
modules in
sophisti-
combat

Story by Brian H. Temple

Photo by Brian H. Temple



SUPPORTING THE GWOT

With advanced technology incorporated into the design, this \$12.5 million center's capabilities are not to be underestimated.

The 45,000 square meter facility, designed to simulate the region's typical urban structures, will combine the use of cameras, motion detectors, real-time top view monitoring, laser rifles and a combination of pyrotechnic means to simulate combat zone activities, according to Maj. Emanuel Atiya, project manager for the Israel Defence Force's Civil Engineering and Construction Center.

"I don't think there are any sites that combine the quality of building of this one, and the technology," he said. "The combination of the construction and the technology is amazing."

As insurgents increasingly use friendly populations as part of their terrorist operations worldwide, it is important for modern-day forces to train realistically to help minimize casualties among noncombatants.

"We are ... putting live fire sounds and sounds of people surrounding the Soldiers. We are designing it to feel that the trainee is in a real fight," Atiya said. These technical accoutrements are important, not only to increasing safety in training, but also in terms

of the culture of training, he said.

Atiya, who has helped construct more traditional live-fire sites, has also witnessed his share of arguments during after action reports on performance.

"Every time when there is training at a site, each soldier sees things from his point of view, and they argue, 'I wasn't there. I walked over there. I saw this happen', but (here) there are no arguments because you are recording everything," he said. "You can play the video and ... learn from the Soldier's behavior much better than the usual training, or even the standard way we are training right now. Always there is arguing."

However, this arguing is apparently reserved for Soldiers post training, not those on the project delivery team.

Although there are differences among U.S. and Israeli business cultures, the Israeli Defence Force, and Ministry of Defence team members worked fabulously with those from M.W. Zander and the Corps of Engineers, said David Vale, with Europe District's Israel Southern Resident Office.

"The Israeli's are very hard workers, and the efforts to

get the project built on time, within budget and quality is outstanding," he said. "I've been impressed with the attention to quality and concerns about getting the project built on time."

Vale said the cohesive teamwork helped the unique construction process move smoothly.

"We started with nothing here - just sand. Now we have infrastructure: water, electric, trailers, a concrete batch plant, a precast plant, four tower cranes, two mobile cranes ... and all will be built essentially in one year," Vale said.

The design / build process allows for simultaneous construction at the actual training site, while production of the concrete modules are built in 10 manufacturing stations just hundreds of feet away. This resulted in acceleration of the construction rate, and reduced construction said Atiya.

"The people at the site needed to think very carefully how to

construct this site. It wasn't very obvious to use a custom site for (precast) concrete," he said. "I think it is going well right now."

With seven to eight blocks being completed daily, the site is approaching completion. Two hundred and fifty four of 470 buildings have been constructed and placed giving this city in the desert some shape, as well as some prominence.

Both the commanding generals for the United State's Training and Doctrine Command, as well as the National Guard, have visited the site, as have dignitaries from countries such as Turkey, Brazil and Singapore. Vale said all have expressed their interest in the continued Global War on Terrorism and commented on the impressive nature of the site.

Block-by-block buildings on the training site take shape in an unconventional project. And, Vale said it is all something to be proud of. "I will remember this project as the best and most gratifying, it will be hard for another project to beat this one. It will be great to see this completed, and (see) troops training in a real urban environment. It will save lives and be invaluable to the Global War on Terror."



Photo by Eyal Mendelovich

▲ Concrete blocks are placed and stacked in the southern Israeli desert to construct a 45,000 square meter urban training facility for the Israel Defence Forces. These blocks will be transformed into a city of 470 multistory buildings replicating the region's typical urban structures.

▼ Keith Riddle (left) and David Vale, Israel Southern Resident Office, walk among the molds used in the construction of the training site.



Photo by Brian H. Temple

David Vale, project engineer, Israel Southern Resident Office, looks over foundations that will support concrete and rebar manufactured blocks. The 45,000-square-meter training facility will combine the use of cameras, real-time monitoring, laser rifles and a combination of pyrotechnic means to simulate an urban combat zone.



Photo by Brian H. Temple